

Foreword

“The villager can’t eat communication”. Chris Kamlongera from Malawi | 11
made that statement at a seminar in Italy a few years ago –capturing at once the essence and the dilemma of communication for development. This book is about exploring both the potential and the limits of communication –of using communication both as a tool and as a way of articulating processes of development and social change, improving everyday lives, and empowering people to influence their own lives and those of their fellow community members. The essence is communication; the dilemma is that communication will not solve every problem, although it can contribute in some ways to problem-solving –we just need to get better at knowing how! The discipline of communication for development is currently at a crossroads, and the approaches that have been taken over the last few decades require serious rethinking. Technologies are evolving, societies are changing, globalization is impacting on everything –and communication for development is evolving and changing, too: as a tool, as an approach and as a scientific sub-discipline of communication concerned with debates and issues relating to development and change in society. The aim of this book is to contribute to the critical reflection about how communication works in processes of change within the contexts of globalization. Or, to rephrase the opening statement, this book asks: how can the villager –and city dweller– use communication?

It would be relevant at this point to say a couple of words about how the book project emerged. It has grown out of the collaboration built up since 2000 in the distance education Master programme in communication for develop-

12 | ment ComDev at Malmö University in southern Sweden. Oscar Hemer has been the coordinator since the programme's inception in 2000, and Thomas Tufte is one of the lecturers, coming over from Copenhagen to teach and supervise. Every year, some 30 new MA students in communication for development from every corner of the world experience our search for appropriate teaching materials. We spent a lot of time identifying relevant books, putting together collections of articles, and tracing the best course material. This book emerged out of the need to have a starting point for course materials in a single coherent format. Now, almost three years after the initial idea for the book, the present volume is the final product.

We would like to thank all the many people who have helped to make this project happen. We would also like to thank our two publishers for agreeing to take on the book: Ulla Carlsson and her team at NORDICOM in Gothenburg, and Atilio Boron, Jorge Fraga, and Florencia Enghel, all at CLACSO, Buenos Aires. Florencia played the important bridging role between Scandinavia and Argentina, having just graduated from the ComDev Master programme at Malmö University; she also came up with the brilliant idea of a joint project between NORDICOM and CLACSO. Many thanks also to DANIDA and Malmö University for financial support for the project. All 36 contributors from all the corners of the world –each in their own way dealing with communication for development– also deserve special thanks for their contributing articles, for showing patience through the editorial processes, and for contributing to this rethinking of communication for development. A special note goes to Everett Rogers who sadly passed away in October 2004, before the publication of his co-authored contribution. Ev Rogers was one of the pioneers in the field, having spent half a century thinking about how to use –and using– communication for development. His capacity for continuously assessing and critically reassessing his own perspectives on communication for development is the spirit this book seeks to capture. Lastly, thanks go to all those people –villagers or city dwellers– who have directly or indirectly participated in, inspired, and served in focus groups and alike –and whose concerns and lives this book hopes to address.

Oscar Hemer

Thomas Tufte

Hagestad, Sweden, and Dyssegård, Denmark, June 21, 2005